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COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS

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* In accordance with rule 72 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council.

The need to harmonize and improve United Nations informatics systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States

The Economic and Social Council,

Conscious of the deep interest of Member States in harnessing the benefits of new information technologies for furthering the objectives of the United Nations, including the objectives of economic and social development,

Recalling its resolutions 1991/70 of 26 July 1991, 1992/60 of 31 July 1992, 1993/56 of 29 July 1993, 1994/46 of 29 July 1994, 1995/61 of 28 July 1995 and 1996/35 of 25 July 1996 on the need to harmonize and improve United Nations information systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States, with due regard to all official languages,

Recalling also that in its resolution 1996/35, it commended the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for the concrete actions it had taken in pursuance of its mandate, and requested the President of the Economic and Social Council to convene the Working Group for one more year, from within existing resources, for the due fulfilment of the provisions of the Council resolutions on this item,

Welcoming the report presented by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics on the progress achieved so far by the Working Group in fulfilling its mandate,

Highly appreciating the accomplishments of the Working Group, which include:

(a) The attainment of near universal connectivity between the United Nations databases and the Permanent Missions of the Member States,

(b) The training of a large number of personnel of the Permanent Missions and the Secretariat on a variety of electronic facilities and techniques,

(c) The identification and progressive elimination of several impediments to access to the United Nations databases,

(d) The establishment of video-conferencing facilities for use by the Permanent Missions and the Secretariat,

(e) The establishment of the United Nations Web Page on the Internet and a connection between this facility and the United Nations Optical Disk System,

(f) The uploading of all resolutions and decisions of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council from 1946 onwards on the United Nations Optical Disk System, and the increasing database of documents on the United Nations Web Page,

(g) The efforts to enable the United Nations and its Member States to reduce waste and duplication as well as expenditure on unnecessary documentation,

(h) The assistance given to Permanent Missions in creating their own Web pages on the Internet,

Deeply appreciating that the work of the Working Group has not involved any additional expenditures and that its needs have been met from within existing resources,

Highly appreciating that the work done by the Working Group has already resulted in savings for the United Nations and its Member States and has created opportunities for further savings,

Taking note with deep interest of the proposed initiatives of the Working Group, including the promotion of computer-based decision-making techniques to facilitate the drafting of resolutions and documents in ways that would accelerate the reaching of agreements in the process of drafting, and the employment of modern information technology for the developmental activities of the United Nations,

Recognizing that the work done by the Working Group will support and facilitate the successful implementation of the initiatives being taken by the Secretary-General with a view to expanding the use of information technology and the availability and transparency of information in order to further facilitate access to United Nations information in all countries,

Agreeing with the assessment contained in the report of the Working Group that further work needs to be done by the Working Group to fulfil its mandate,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up action taken, [1]

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[1] E/1997/88.

1. Reiterates, once again, the high priority it attaches to easy, economical, uncomplicated and unhindered access for States Members of the United Nations and for observers, through, inter alia, their Permanent Missions, to the growing number of computerized databases and information systems and services of the United Nations;

2. Calls for the urgent and continued implementation of measures required to achieve these objectives;

3. Reaffirms the continuing need for representatives of States to be closely consulted and actively associated with the respective executive and governing bodies of United Nations institutions dealing with informatics within the United Nations system, so that the specific needs of States as internal end-users can be given due priority;

4. Decides that the action programme to harmonize and improve United Nations informatics systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States should continue to be implemented from within existing resources and in full consultation with the representatives of States;

5. Highly commends the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for the concrete actions it has taken and for the impressive results it has produced in pursuance of its mandate;

6. Requests the President of the Economic and Social Council to convene the Working Group for one more year, from within existing resources, for the due fulfilment of the provisions of the Council resolutions on this item, and for facilitating the successful implementation of the initiatives being taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the use of information technology;

7. Requests the Working Group to design an overall information management strategy for the United Nations system;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to extend full cooperation to the Working Group and to give priority to implementing its recommendations;

9. Also requests the Secretary-General to report on the follow-up action taken on the present resolution, including the findings of the Working Group, to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998.